



Spring Meeting & Luncheon At Historic Stagg Hall



Sunday, May 7, 2017

8450 Commerce Street • Port Tobacco Courthouse

Please join us for an afternoon at Historic Stagg Hall in the Port Tobacco Historic Village for our program:

Revisiting Historic Port Tobacco

Historic Port Tobacco Village Plan - Cathy Thompson

Archaeology in Port Tobacco - Carol Cowherd

Lot 47 at Stagg Hall - Michael J. Mazzeo, Jr.

Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer of Port Tobacco - Kevin Grote

George Atzerodt, Port Tobacco Conspirator - Dave Taylor

1:30 pm – Lunch ~ 2:30 pm – Program ~ 3:00 pm – Tours of Stagg Hall,
including the new Thomas Howe Ridgate Merchant Office, the Port Tobacco Gallery & Lot 47 Gallery

*In case of inclement weather, the luncheon will be served inside the Port Tobacco Courthouse.

Menu

Crab balls • Assorted sandwiches • Fruit salad • Potato salad • Brownies & Cookies • Tea/coffee

\$20.00 per person - Please R.s.v.p. no later than April 28, 2017 to:

Carol Donohue ~ 16401 Old Marshall Hall Road ~ Accokeek, MD 20607

A Charles County Slaveholder in Minnesota

By Dr. Christopher P. Lehman

Washington County, Minnesota was home to one of the few southern slaveholders to take up residence in the state. Robert Dyson, a homeopathic doctor from Charles County, Maryland, traveled to Minnesota at the age of thirty-one in late 1857 or early 1858, invested in real estate there, returned to Maryland to participate in the slave trade, and then went back to Minnesota to reside permanently there. In addition, he became a leader of that state's Democratic Party within two years of his relocation. As a result, wealth came from slave labor in Charles County contributed partly to the economic and political development of Washington County, Minnesota through Dyson.



In 1855 he inherited eleven slaves from his late father Bennett Dyson, and their collective value added to \$4,000. The junior Dyson then left his home of Charles County, and by spring 1858 he started a real estate agency in Minneapolis.

He was one of dozens of southerners who invested in land in Minnesota, either as an alternative to involvement to plantation slavery or as a complement to it. He advertised land for sale in his hometown newspaper. An advertisement on page

three of the May 6, 1858 issue of the Port Tobacco Times and Charles County Advertiser states Dyson's intention to attend May Court for anyone wanting to buy land from him. Having written the statement on April 29, 1858, he identified Minneapolis as the official location of his business.

On the other hand, directly below that notice in the May 6 issue was another one from Dyson, and it described a completely different business transaction. He informed his hometown readers that while temporarily in his hometown in May 1858, he would also sell one of his slaves to an interested buyer. He advertised, "For Sale: A Young Likely NEGRO WOMAN will be offered at private sale during May Court in Port Tobacco." He also wrote this statement on April 29, meaning that he considered Minneapolis his business home while drafting the advertisement for the slave sale.

When he returned to Minnesota later that year, he set up his residence in Washington County. On October 26, 1858, he began promoting his medical practice in the Stillwater Messenger, and he designated Stillwater as his address. Meanwhile, he started involving himself in local politics, and his efforts proved successful in a short amount of time. He represented the county in Minnesota's Democratic Convention in the summer of 1859, according to the Red Wing Sentinel of August 20, 1859. He had not yet settled in his new location for an entire year, but he had already won over the county's Democrats.



Dr. Robert Dyson was born in 1826 and died 24 October 1860. He is buried at St. Ignatius Catholic Church Cemetery in Hill Top.

The state elections that fall proved disastrous for the Democrats, because the Republican Party wrested political control of Minnesota from them. By the 1860 census, Dyson was back in Charles County, Maryland, residing in the town of Hill Top and resuming his medical practice there until his death on October 24 of that year. Nevertheless, Dyson had made his mark in Washington County. He had provided a service for Minnesotans, and the eleven slaves from his inheritance generated some of the wealth from which he paid for land in Minnesota and advertisements in the Messenger. He was just one link between the county and the economy of African American slavery, but he was a link nonetheless.

Bibliography

- Advertisement, Stillwater Messenger, 26 October 1858, 1.
- Advertisement, Port Tobacco Times and Charles County Advertiser, 6 May 1858, 3.
- "Bennett Dyson, Re-Appraisalment & Division," Inventories, 1854-1858, Charles County, Maryland Probate Court (August Term 1856), 251.
- "Democratic State Convention," Red Wing Sentinel, 20 August 1859, 2.
- U. S. 1860 Census, Hill Top, Charles, Maryland, 59.

Dr. Lehman is a Professor at St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, Minnesota. He was also a Visiting Fellow, Harvard University, Summer 2011

An Evening with John Wilkes Booth & The Friends of Rich Hill

As part of the First Friday series, the Society for the Restoration of Port Tobacco featured the Friends of Rich Hill at their March 3rd event at the Port Tobacco Courthouse.

Mike Mazzeo was on hand to give an overview of the history of the Friends of Rich Hill and to unveil the new panel exhibits to be housed in Rich Hill. Rich Hill Steering Committee members Mary Pat Berry, Ron Brown, Carol Donohue, Debra Scoggins, and Laurie Verge introduced each panel and Cathy Thompson gave an overview on the structural and archaeological progress at Rich Hill.

Rich Hill Steering Committee member Dave Taylor re-enacted an Oscar-winning performance as John Wilkes Booth in the “pine-thicket” at Rich Hill following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. The audience was spellbound as they were transformed back to April of 1865.

The next First Friday event at the Courthouse will feature “*An Evening with the Conspirators: A Conversation with George Atzerodt & Mary Surratt.*”



Kate Ramirez & Dave Taylor.



Panels about Samuel Cox & Samuel Cox, Jr.



John Wilkes Booth in the pine-thicket at Rich Hill.



*Panels of Charles County's Conspirators,
Witnesses & Accomplices.*

Smuggling Secrets of the Confederacy: An Evening with Olivia Floyd

On February 18, 2017, performing to a packed audience at the Port Tobacco Courthouse, the Historical Society sponsored a re-enactment performance of the story of Olivia Floyd saving the lives of Confederate soldiers and the telling of the *Legend of the Blue Dog*.

Cast of Characters included:

- Narrator – Dave Taylor
- Olivia Floyd – Kate Ramirez
- Butler – Mike Callahan
- Courier – Garth Bowling
- General Joseph Hooker – Paul Severence
- Union Soldier – Bob Bowser
- Col. Bennett Young – Dennis Spears
- Confederate Soldiers – Brian Piaquadio & Jim Dunbar



Olivia Floyd retelling the Blue Dog Legend



Colonel Bennett Young pinning the medal on Olivia Floyd.



General Joseph Hooker resting his feet upon the andiron holding the secret message.

More photos continued on page 5



Cast of Characters.



Unveiling of the Olivia Floyd Panels.



Auctioning of the Civil War themed baskets.



Open House at Historic Rich Hill

Rich Hill Farm Road, Bel Alton, MD

Sunday, April 23, 2017

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

- Costumed re-enactors
- Civil War encampments
- Archaeological digs
- Historical Organization displays
- Tours, Exhibits and much more...

Free event, open to the public

richhillfriends.org



Friends of Rich Hill



FRIEND

<i>Mr. & Mrs. Gene Ackerman (VA)</i>	<i>Mary Forsht-Tucker (MD)</i>	<i>Elsie Picyk (MD)</i>
<i>Marietta Arenberg (MD)</i>	<i>Sheila Geisert (MD)</i>	<i>Mr. & Mrs. Tom Pike (MD)</i>
<i>Mr. & Mrs. James H. Berry (MD)</i>	<i>Kathryn B. Giannetti (MD)</i>	<i>Jessica Poetker (MD)</i>
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GENERAL

Charles County Maryland Genealogical Society (MD)

Holiday Trail Great Success

The Charles County Holiday Trail was another success this December. We had over 80 visitors during the weekend event. A special thank you to Deb Scoggins who coordinated this event and to Mary Pat Berry who decorated Friendship House with holiday greens. Great appreciation goes to our tour guides: Mary Pat Berry, Ron Brown, John & Joyce Candland, Carol Donohue, Mike Mazzeo, Norman Saunders, Elsie Picyk, Howard Post and Debra Scoggins.



New Resident at Historic Stagg Hall



There is a new resident in the Merchant Office at Historic Stagg Hall: Thomas Howe Ridgate. Thanks to the donations from the recent Olivia Floyd event we were able to purchase a mannequin, wig & hat. The beautiful colonial costume is on loan from the Port Tobacco Players.

It was in the days following the second World War, that residents of the small, but history-laden town of Port Tobacco looked across their town square at the burned rubble of their once-proud courthouse and decided to rebuild.

During the winter of 1947 a group of artists from Port Tobacco and La Plata came together in the drawing room of Stagg Hall to conceive a plan to bring to the stage entertainment that would aid the Society for the Restoration of Port Tobacco to return their town to its former glory.

They spent the next 20 years performing in high school auditoriums, court rooms, village greens...anywhere that people wanted to see a play. Their efforts paid off and the courthouse in the Port Tobacco Village was restored.

In 1974 the Port Tobacco Players found a permanent home in La Plata. They evolved into a cultural staple in Charles County's historic landscape and today, continue the tradition of providing quality theater to the citizens of Southern Maryland.

It is with great pride that the Port Tobacco Players partner with the Port Tobacco Historic Village to bring their story to the Merchant Office at Historic Stagg Hall.

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PAST PRESIDENTS

Bennett Crain 1962-1963
 Eugene A. Jenkins, Jr. 1963-1964, 1966-1967
 H. Maxwell Mitchell, Jr. 1964-1966
 W. Preston Williams 1967-1968
 John H. Mitchell 1968-1970
 Watson M. Perrygo 1970-1978
 George C. Dyson 1978-1982
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 Richard E. Heise, II 1985-1986
 Michael J. Mazzeo, Jr. 1986-1992
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EDITOR’S NOTE

Articles of historic interest on Southern Maryland are requested for publication in future issues of *The Record*. Please send your articles and photographs to: The Historical Society of Charles County, Publications, *The Record*, P.O. Box 2806, La Plata, Maryland 20646.

Friendship House Committees

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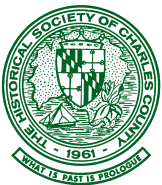


Mark Your Calendar

- **Saturday, May 6** – 8th Annual Market Day at the Port Tobacco Courthouse, 10 am to 2 pm. (raindate May 20th)
- **Sunday, May 7** – Spring Luncheon Meeting at Historic Stagg Hall, Port Tobacco, 1:30 pm.
- **Sunday, May 23** – Open House at Historic Rich Hill: Re-enactors, Civil War Encampments, Archaeological Digs, Historical Organizations Displays, 10 am to 4 pm.
- **Saturday, October 21** – Fall Dinner Meeting, Durham Church, 6 pm. Dr. Bradley Gotfried will speak on a Civil War topic.
- **Saturday, January 20, 2018** – Winter Meeting, Port Tobacco Courthouse, 2pm. Dr. Julia King will present “The Search for Josiah Henson”.



Dr. Julia King will be our guest speaker in January 2018 on the archaeological findings of the search for Josiah Henson on the Historic La Grange property in La Plata.



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CHARLES COUNTY, INC.

P.O. Box 2806 • La Plata, Maryland 20646
www.charlescountyhistorical.org